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# Modern Philology

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## A PLAUTINE SOURCE OF *THE MERRY WIVES* OF *WINDSOR*

### I

Up to the present time the sources of much of the plot of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* have been untraced. In regard to these portions of the play Neilson's summary expresses the opinion of Shakespeare scholars: "The initial betrayal of Falstaff by Pistol and Nym, the disguise as Mother Prat, the pinching by the fairies, the underplot of the triple wooing of Anne Page, and all the characters save the commonplace of the jealous husband, seem to be original."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, however, ever since Shakespeare's day a source for all these elements of *The Merry Wives*, except the fairies' part of the play (and a suggestion for that exists therein), has been readily accessible to scholars, but it has been hitherto unnoticed. This source is the comedy of *Casina* by Plautus. That this drama served as a direct source for all that part of *The Merry Wives* not founded upon either *The Two Lovers of Pisa* or *Philenio*<sup>2</sup> the writer hopes to show in the following pages.

### II

Before the question of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Plautus is taken up, it seems best to review the existing theories as to the originals of *The Merry Wives*. The first suggestion concerning a

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Shakespeare*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> These sources are later considered and their contribution to Shakespeare's comedy defined.

source for the comedy occurs in Langbaine's *Dramatic Poets*.<sup>1</sup> There Langbaine calls attention to the resemblance in plot of the Shakespearean play to *Lucius and Camillus*, a novel in *The Fortunate, Deceived, and Unfortunate Lovers*.<sup>2</sup> He says that, although the stories in the collection were written since Shakespeare's time (the book was published in 1632), yet they are translations from the novels of Cinthio and Malespini, thus leading the reader to infer that Shakespeare, in Langbaine's opinion, had perhaps utilized an original Italian story. Unfortunately, the tale is not to be found in Cinthio, and Malespini's collection was not published until 1609, so that such an inference would be decidedly wrong.

Steevens<sup>3</sup> gives as possible sources tales from *Il Pecorone*<sup>4</sup> of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino and from the *Piacevoli Notti*<sup>5</sup> of Straparola. As quoted by Malone,<sup>6</sup> Farmer advances *The Two Lovers of Pisa*, a novel in *Tarleton's News out of Purgatory*, as a source. Malone himself believed that the Windsor setting of the comedy was suggested to its author by *The Fishwife's Tale of Brentford* in *Westward for Smelts* and that the plot came from a combination of *The Two Lovers* and *Lucius and Camillus*.<sup>7</sup> Another tale from Straparola, that of *Filenio*,<sup>8</sup> has also been cited as a source.<sup>9</sup> This story was translated by Painter and appears as Novel 49, Tome I, of *The Palace of Pleasure*.<sup>10</sup> It is there entitled *Philenio Sisterna*.

These various tales have all been taken to refer to the plot of the merry wives against Falstaff. In the story of *Filenio* and in the English version, *Philenio*, we find the lover paying his addresses simultaneously to three ladies who confide in each other and combine to revenge themselves upon him for his triplicity, so to speak.

<sup>1</sup> Ed. 1691, pp. 459-60. Gildon in his garbling of Langbaine omits any mention of *The Merry Wives*.

<sup>2</sup> Novel I. Reprinted by Hazlitt, *Shakespeare's Library*, III, 33 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Malone, *Variorum Shakespeare*, VIII, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Day I, Novel 2.

<sup>5</sup> Night IV, Fable 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Variorum Shakespeare*, VIII, 210.

<sup>8</sup> Night II, Fable 2.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Neilson, *op. cit.*, p. 152, or Hazlitt, *Shakespeare's Library*, Vol. III, where the tale is reprinted.

<sup>10</sup> Miss Porter and Miss Clark, in their First Folio edition of *The Merry Wives*, claim to be the first to point out that Painter translated Straparola's novel. W. G. Waters, however, in the notes to his translation of the *Notti* for the Society of Bibliophiles, London, 1898, mentions Painter's translation of *Filenio* (IV, 283).

Straparola in *Nerino of Portugal*—merely translated in the *News*—relates how a young man who is enamored of a lady unwittingly keeps her husband informed of the progress of his suit to her and how the husband seeks to take the two *in flagrante delicto*. To escape capture by the jealous husband Nerino hides successively in three places from his pursuers and so evades punishment. The novel of *Bucciuolo* by Ser Giovanni and its English translation, *Lucius and Camillus*, are similar to *Nerino* in their general outlines. The sole resemblance<sup>1</sup> of *The Fishwife's Tale* has been noted above.

Of these stories five may be eliminated as probable sources for *The Merry Wives*. *The Fishwife's Tale*<sup>2</sup> and *Lucius and Camillus* appeared first respectively in 1620 and 1632;<sup>3</sup> hence they are out of the question as sources for the play. Ser Giovanni's novel (the original of *Lucius and Camillus*) has been set aside by some scholars because of their doubt as to Shakespeare's knowledge of Italian.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason the *Nerino* and the *Filenio* of Straparola would have to be passed over as sources. However, in regard to the three novels just mentioned a better cause than Shakespeare's problematical lack of knowledge of Italian exists for their rejection as probable originals for *The Merry Wives*. Both *Bucciuolo* and *Nerino* closely approach in their plots *The Two Lovers of Pisa*; indeed that tale is a mere translation of *Nerino*. Therefore, the English novel may as well be a source as either of the Italian narratives. Besides, when an English version was available, one, moreover, contained in such a work as *Tarleton's News*, which traded upon the popularity of a famous comedian, and which was hence surely known to Shakespeare, it seems absurd to suppose that the

<sup>1</sup> Unless we find a very general and equally vague resemblance in the fact that both the play and the tale have to do with jealous husbands.

<sup>2</sup> However, Lee, *Life of William Shakespeare*, p. 247, gives, with *The Two Lovers*, Ser Giovanni's novel and *The Fishwife's Tale* as sources for Shakespeare's play.

<sup>3</sup> Lee, *ibid.*, quotes Malone and Steevens as saying that there was an edition of *Westward for Smells* in 1603. As *The Merry Wives* was printed in 1602 and perhaps was first acted three or four years earlier, the situation is not altered. Malone, *Variorum Shakespeare*, VIII, 210, conjectures that the tales in *The Fortunate . . . Lovers* had appeared in English by Shakespeare's time. There is no evidence, however, of any edition of this work earlier than that of 1632.

<sup>4</sup> See Neilson, *op. cit.* The writer does not subscribe to the idea of Shakespeare's ignorance of Italian, for he knows of no good grounds on which to found such a belief.

dramatist resorted to an Italian original.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason one appears justified in considering that Shakespeare used Painter's translation of *Filenio* as found in *The Palace of Pleasure* and not the text of Straparola. It would seem then that *The Two Lovers of Pisa* (an English translation from the Italian published about 1590) and *Philenio Sisterna* (a translation also from the Italian dating from 1566) are the sources of *The Merry Wives* now usually recognized.<sup>2</sup>

A comparison, however, of *The Two Lovers* and the play shows that but part of the plot of the latter can be founded upon the novel. Nor, indeed, would the indebtedness really be any greater with any of the other versions of the same story named above.<sup>3</sup> *The Two Lovers of Pisa* resembles in nothing but its barest outlines a portion of the plot of *The Merry Wives*,<sup>4</sup> and the inclusion of *Philenio* as a source accounts for only one additional element in the play and that a minor one. To supply the hitherto unknown source for these apparently original portions of *The Merry Wives* is, then, the writer's task, and, as he has said, he believes that he has discovered that source in the *Casina* of Plautus.

### III

The most obvious resemblance of *The Merry Wives* to *Casina* is in the subplot of the former, that is to say, in the part of the Shakespearean play which deals with the wooing of Anne Page. Here Dr. Caius and Slender are suitors for the hand of Anne. Caius is favored by the mother, Slender by the father. Anne, however,

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt seems to have been of the opinion that Shakespeare used *The Two Lovers* as a source for *The Merry Wives* rather than any other novel. He points out specific resemblances between the story and the play in his *Shakespeare's Library*, III, 66, note; 67, note; 69, note; 72, note.

<sup>2</sup> See Neilson, *op. cit.*, p. 152; Hart, *The Merry Wives* (Arden ed.), Introduction, p. lxxxi. Fleay's claim, *Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama*, II, 161, that the plot of *Wily Beguiled* "is identical with the Anne Page story" is rashly made. There is a very vague resemblance but nothing more.

<sup>3</sup> In *Bucciuolo* and in *Lucius and Camillus* the lover, upon the occasion of his first surprise by the husband, is hidden by his mistress under a pile of half-dry linen. Upon the next visit of the lover he is hidden elsewhere, and the unlucky husband searches the pile of clothing. There is no basket and the clothes are not dirty, as in *The Merry Wives*. In *The Two Lovers* Lionello is hidden in "a great driefatte full of feathers." Cf. Hazlitt, *Shakespeare's Library*, III, 66, note.

<sup>4</sup> The most important differences between the novel and the play are pointed out later.

dislikes both these lovers, and herself prefers Fenton, a man of higher birth than either she or they. Each of the two parents intends to carry through a plot unknown to the other whereby Anne would be stolen away from a masquerade (the culmination of the trick on Falstaff) and wedded to one of the favored suitors. Both Caius and Slender run away with persons dressed as they have been told Anne would be clad, but return in great disgust, for in each case the supposed girl has turned out to be a boy in disguise. The imposture is discovered by each after the marriage ceremony has been performed. Then Fenton and Anne enter, and, disclosing that they have eloped and have been married, receive the parental blessing.

In *Casina*, Euthynicus is in love with the slave Casina. Lysidamus, his father, who also is enamored of her, purposes to marry her to Olympio, his bailiff. Cleustrata, mother to Euthynicus and wife to Lysidamus, suspecting her husband's passion for the girl, favors her marriage to Chalinus, armor-bearer to Euthynicus. It seems understood that the newly wed husband (whether he is Olympio or Chalinus) shall act with suitable complacency toward his own master (Lysidamus or Euthynicus). After much squabbling between the two parties lots are drawn to determine which candidate shall wed Casina. Olympio wins and he and his master prepare for the wedding. After the feast Olympio is to pretend to start with his bride for Lysidamus' villa, but is in reality to repair with her to the home of a neighbor, Alcesimus, where his place is to be taken by his master. Discovering this plan through the means of Chalinus, Cleustrata disguises Chalinus as Casina, and he sets out with Olympio. Cleustrata, Myrrhina, her friend and wife to Alcesimus, and Pardalisca, a slave, watch outside the home of Alcesimus after the bridal couple accompanied by Lysidamus have entered it. First, Olympio reappears. After the bailiff has soliloquized upon the beating administered to him by the false bride and has related the particulars to Cleustrata, Lysidamus enters in great trepidation and confusion. Chalinus follows shortly in his feminine costume and confronts the two, who apparently have become aware of the supposed bride's sex and identity (the play is very defective near the end). Lysidamus asks his wife to forgive him; this she does and the two are reconciled. The epilogue states that Casina

will be discovered to be a free woman, the daughter of Alcesimus, and that thereupon she will be married to Euthynicus.

We find in both plays, then, the man and wife urging the claims of their respective candidates for the hand of a young girl (in *Casina* a slave, not a daughter). The maiden is in love with a third person—the son of the house in Plautus. A mock wedding occurs in which the bride's part is taken by a male, and from which results the discomfiture of the bridegroom (two of these ceremonies take place in *The Merry Wives*). Finally, the true lovers are united. Furthermore, the mother in both plays is assisted by a friend and by a female servant.

#### IV

In other respects the stories of the two plays resemble each other, and this likeness extends into the main plot of *The Merry Wives*. In the same manner as Cleustrata and Myrrhina conspire in *Casina* to bring Lysidamus to shame, Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford in Shakespeare's comedy devise ways to expose the credulous amorousness of Falstaff to the general ridicule.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted, also, that the merry wives make three attempts to break Falstaff of his passion for Mrs. Ford. Cleustrata in *Casina* tries three times after the lot-drawing (the beginning of Lysidamus' plot) to divert her husband from his pursuit of Casina. First, she attempts to embroil him with Alcesimus, whose house is necessary to the plan (III, i, ii, iv); next, she instigates Pardalisca's story to Lysidamus of Casina's madness in the hope of frightening him away from the girl (III, v); finally, she exposes him by means of the false Casina (V). In both plays the first two tricks are unsuccessful; the last stratagems, in each play the most elaborate, are successful. The final disgrace of both Falstaff and Lysidamus takes place before more of the *dramatis personae* than do the earlier attempted tricks; that is, they are more public.

Myrrhina—somewhat too philosophically perhaps—affects no jealousy of her husband Alcesimus. Likewise, Page expresses his

<sup>1</sup> In *Philenio* the three offended ladies do not publicly make Philenio a laughing-stock; in fact his revenge in turn upon them is more in spirit like the merry wives' trick upon Falstaff. Also each of the three ladies in the story plays a trick upon Philenio. That person, besides, is a young man, whereas Falstaff is advanced in years.

faith in his wife and refuses to believe that she would listen to Falstaff's lovemaking (II, i, 142 ff.). Just as Chalinus is privy to Cleustrata's devices against her husband and Olympio, so does Robin, Falstaff's page lent by him to Mrs. Page, undoubtedly understand what the two women are projecting against his master.

In Plautus' comedy, Chalinus, overhearing the plans of Lysidamus and Olympio, betrays them to Cleustrata, who sets in motion her counterplot for humiliating the conspirators. So Pistol and Nym, to thwart Falstaff's proposed seduction of Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page, inform Ford and Page of their late patron's intention. Furthermore, as the old satyr Lysidamus is the butt of *Casina*, so is Falstaff the "vlouting stog" of *The Merry Wives*. The supposedly fortunate suitor of Casina, likewise, comes to grief, just as do the favored Caius and Slender in Shakespeare's play.

## V

The scene of *Casina* is removed by Shakespeare from Greece to the Windsor of Henry IV's reign, and the Grecian citizens and slaves are transformed into a group of burgesses, country gentlemen, courtiers, and their hangers-on. Aside from its being mingled with the matter of at least one Elizabethan tale (or two, if the *Philenio* is counted), many other changes have been made in *Casina*, both in the action and in the characters.

In *The Merry Wives* the plot is built around two points: one, the jealousy of Ford, the other, the wooing of Anne Page. In *Casina*, however, the two are combined, and the hoodwinking of the old debauchee goes with the mock marriage. Jealousy is present in the Plautine comedy, but it is interwoven with the courtship motive. Cleustrata is jealous of her disreputable old husband Lysidamus and is nagging at him constantly. Shakespeare has turned the tables and has set a jealous husband to watching his wife. One should remember, also, that the disguise of Chalinus as the bride Casina deceives two persons, the husband Olympio and Lysidamus, while in *The Merry Wives* there are two bogus brides for the two deceived wooers. Plautus gives us no love scenes between Euthynicus and Casina; indeed, neither appears during the course of the action. Shakespeare, however, not only shows his young



lovers together, but brings them on the stage married at the conclusion of the play.

Rowe recorded<sup>1</sup> the tradition that Queen Elizabeth, having been highly pleased with Falstaff in *Henry IV*, commanded Shakespeare to write a play showing the knight in love. *The Merry Wives*, Rowe tells us, was the result. This story gains in credibility when we consider how *The Two Lovers* is altered. The aged Falstaff is made its hero instead of the young Lionello. The necessity of bringing Falstaff in as the would-be seducer—since he could hardly figure as the husband—accounts for this change in character. No doubt, too, the influence of Lysidamus in *Casina* contributes somewhat to this alteration.

## VI

The plot of the Plautine play is considerably changed in minor points in order to admit Falstaff into it. In *Casina*, Lysidamus, the prototype of Page, is old, cowardly, debauched, credulous, vain, and perseveringly amorous. Naturally enough these traits go to Falstaff, who had them with certain saving graces already indeed in *Henry IV*. Earlier critics have derived Falstaff from various classical originals—from the boasting soldier, as Pyrgopolinices in *Miles Gloriosus*,<sup>2</sup> or from the parasite, as Ergasilus in *Captivi*. However, a figure in Latin comedy which resembles Falstaff closely has hitherto been overlooked. This is that of the licentious old man, such as is Antipho in *Stichus* or especially Lysidamus in *Casina*. In fact it seems probable that the likeness of Lysidamus to Falstaff first suggested to Shakespeare the use of *Casina* as a source for *The Merry Wives*. Lysidamus is in love, it should be remembered. If we put credence in Rowe's tradition, which is mentioned above, we see here another reason why this particular Latin play would have appealed to Shakespeare as a source.

Lee says in his *Life of Shakespeare*<sup>3</sup> of the chief character of *The Merry Wives*: "Although Falstaff is the central figure, he is a mere caricature of his former self. His power of retort has decayed, and

<sup>1</sup> In his "Account" of Shakespeare's life, *Works* (ed. 1709), I, viii-ix.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see J. Thümmel's article, *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, XIII, 1-12, and particularly Reinhardstoettner, *Plautus*, pp. 671 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 152.

the laugh invariably turns against him. In name only is he identical with the potent humorist of 'Henry IV.' " With this opinion all readers of the play are in agreement. Why then should the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* be no longer the Falstaff of *Henry IV*? The answer is that he is influenced by the Lysidamus of *Casina*. From the ready and resourceful old rascal of the historical plays he has become a gull—easily hoodwinked and falling into trap after trap, exactly the same kind of character as Lysidamus. In explanation of this fact it may be said by some critics that the unfortunate, but later successful, lover of *The Two Lovers* is transformed into the same figure. This is of course true, but Falstaff and Lionello both have been made over upon the model of the Lysidamus of Plautus.

The variations in *The Merry Wives* from the plots of the novels will be given below to show how far Shakespeare was from a blind following of *The Two Lovers* or of *Philenio* and how he adapted them as he did *Casina*.

In *The Two Lovers* the jealous husband Mutio is a very old man ("his age about fourscore") and his wife Margaret is young. Her lover Lionello is "a young Gentleman," who is attracted to her by her beauty, not by her husband's wealth. Their affection is genuine and mutual. Lionello confides his passion for Margaret to her husband "for that hee was olde and knewe much, and was a Physition that with his drugges might helpe him forward in his purposes," and requests Mutio's aid in his suit to the lady, ignorant of course that she is the old doctor's wife. Thrice does Mutio surprise the two together; once Lionello escapes by hiding in a hamper filled with feathers, the next time by concealing himself in a nook between the floors, and the third time by being shut up in a chest of papers which is carried out from Mutio's country house when it has been fired by the jealous old man. Lionello does not suspect that his mistress and Mutio are man and wife until, as he is telling the story of his amours to Mutio and his brothers-in-law, he is warned of the facts in the case by Margaret's sending him a cup of wine with a ring in it which he has given her. He then turns the matter off by alleging that his stories to Mutio have been false and that he has told them to play upon the physician's jealousy. After this Mutio is mocked until he dies of chagrin; the lovers are then married.

In *Philenio* the hero makes love to three women, who learn from each other of his courtship of them and plan accordingly to revenge the slight upon him. They separately arrange assignations with Philenio in the course of which he is badly mishandled. Learning how the ladies have duped him, he in turn revenges himself upon them. In the Shakespearian play there are but two ladies and Falstaff makes no effort to avenge himself upon them for their treatment of him. The sole resemblances are in the making love to more than one woman, their finding out this fact, and paying the lover off for his indiscretion.

The couple who are attempting to direct a marriage in Shakespeare's comedy have no other point of disagreement than that which arises from the marrying of their daughter. That is to say, Shakespeare has taken the Lysidamus and Cleustrata of Plautus, has reversed their jealousy, making it unfounded incidentally, and has given it to his Ford and Mrs. Ford. The sole attribute of Lysidamus and Cleustrata preserved by Page and his wife is their conflict over Anne's suitors (in Plautus over those of Casina). On the other hand, their friends, the Fords, have the jealousy of Cleustrata and the intriguing of Lysidamus with the important difference that the husband is the jealous person and that his wife has no intention of being unfaithful to him. In other respects the Fords correspond to Alcesimus and Myrrhina, neighbors and friends of Lysidamus and Cleustrata.

Shakespeare's Shallow was probably introduced into the play because a second foolish old man seemed necessary to act as a foil to Falstaff, as Alcesimus in *Casina* sets off Lysidamus. The slave Casina is changed by Shakespeare into Page's daughter Anne, an heiress. It is important to note here again that in the Plautine epilogue *Casina* is stated to be the long-lost daughter of Alcesimus, and hence a free woman. If we consider that Shakespeare effected this alteration in the degree of his heroine before the opening of his comedy, instead of after its conclusion, the resemblance of the character is still more striking.

The two candidates for the hand of Casina—Olympio and Chalinus—Shakespeare has transformed, respectively, into Slender, Page's preference as a son-in-law, and Doctor Caius, Mrs. Page's

choice. Shakespeare's Pistol and Nym, who revenge themselves upon Falstaff by revealing his projects to Page and Ford, play a portion of the part of Plautus' Chalinus, who betrays to his mistress his master's plans in regard to Casina. The mutes who are stolen away from the fairy dance in Windsor Forest by Slender and Caius exercise the function of Chalinus as a bride. Dame Quickly is a Shakespearian version of the mischievous Pardalisca, maid to Cleustrata. Finally, it is not impossible that the Host of the Garter is expanded from the Plautine cook, Chytrio.

These redistributions of traits and remodelings of characters, which may seem complicated but which are not in fact difficult to follow, can best be summarized in tabular form:

<i>Casina</i>	<i>The Merry Wives</i>
Lysidamus	Sir John Falstaff
Lysidamus	George Page
Alcesimus	Ford
Alcesimus	Robert Shallow
Euthynicus	Fenton
Euthynicus	William Page
Olympio	Abraham Slender
Chalinus	Doctor Caius
Chalinus	Pistol
Chalinus	Nym
Chalinus	Fairies in green and white
Chytrio	Host of the Garter
Myrrhina	Mrs. Ford
Cleustrata	Mrs. Page
Casina	Anne Page
Pardalisca	Mrs. Quickly

All the characters of Plautus are therefore, at least, paralleled in some form or other by Shakespeare. Only Sir Hugh, Bardolph, Robin, Simple, and Rugby are obtained from sources other than *Casina* or the *novelle*. Of these Bardolph<sup>1</sup> and the page occur in *Henry IV*,

<sup>1</sup> It is not impossible that Shakespeare's choice of the name Bardolph as a designation for Falstaff's red-nosed follower was a jest directed at a friend and colleague. In *Shakespeare's England*, II, 82-83, Oswald Barron quotes from a pamphlet, *A brief Discourse of the causes of Discord amongst the officers of arms and of the great abuses and absurdities comitted by painters to the great prejudice and hindrance of the same office*, the author of which was William Smith, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant: "Phillipps the player had graven in a gold ring the arms of Sir William Phillipps, Lord Bardolph, with the said L. Bardolph's cote quartred. . . . ." This pamphlet dates from 1599. There seems a

Part II, as does Shallow, who takes over some of Alcesimus' functions. Sir Hugh, Simple, and Rugby are not found in any other Shakespearian play, nor is there a hint in *Casina* for any one of them, unless it be that Sir Hugh's part was suggested by the fight between Olympio and Chalinus in II, vi.

## VII

In the pages which follow, the relationship of *The Merry Wives* to *Casina* will be shown in detail. The various passages in Shakespeare's play which seem founded upon Plautus' comedy will be taken up in order.<sup>1</sup>

First,<sup>2</sup> Falstaff's belief that the wives of Page and Ford look upon him with favor, as expressed in I, iii, 48 ff., is derived from *Casina* (II, iii, 226-27). Here, after telling how he employs perfumes to make himself agreeable to Casina, Lysidamus says,

. . . . Et placeo, ut videor.

So Falstaff says of Mrs. Ford,

. . . . She gives the leer of invitation. I can construe the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behaviour, to be English'd rightly, is "I am Sir John Falstaff's."

The agreement of Pistol and Nym that they shall revenge themselves upon Sir John for his casting them off by informing Ford and Page of the knight's contemplated suits to their respective wives (I, iii, 99 ff.), seems suggested by the soliloquies and eavesdropping of Chalinus (*Casina*, II, vii, viii; III, ii). In the first scene cited, Chalinus, depressed by the victory of Olympio in the lot-drawing

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chance that the dramatist, by way of poking fun at Augustine Phillips' pretensions of descent from the Lord Bardolph of Agincourt, supplied the actor with a Bardolph of that period—specially invented—from whom he might, according to the facetious Shakespeare, be descended. Such might be the explanation of the Bardolph and Lord Bardolph of *Henry IV*, Part II. Surely it is possible that if in *The Merry Wives* the poet ridicules the family of Lucy he would not hesitate to laugh at a brother-actor.

<sup>1</sup> References are to the second edition of Lindsay's *Plautus* in the *Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* and to Neilson's *Shakespeare* in the *Cambridge Poets Series*.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives*, I, i, 10-11, meant to pun upon the Latin and English meanings of "armiger." To the Roman the word denoted "armor-bearer," a kind of servant; to the Englishman, "arms-bearer," or gentleman. Slender calls Shallow "armigero," and in *Casina*, II, iii, 257, occur the words, "armigero nili atque inproba" ("to the armor-bearer, worthless and base"). It should be noted that here we find the dative case of the word, the same form which Slender improperly uses.

of II, vi, expresses his disappointment. When Lysidamus and Olympio enter (II, viii), Chalinus, eager for revenge, conceals himself in such a way as to overhear their conversation. The master and his bailiff discuss their plans, and Lysidamus explains his project of Olympio's taking Casina to the house of Alcesimus, where he has arranged that the occupants shall be out of the way. Understanding now fully the grounds for Lysidamus' persistence in backing Olympio's suit and anxious for vengeance upon his rival, Chalinus hurries from the stage to reveal to his mistress what he has learned. This revelation of the perfidy of Lysidamus takes place off stage (Pistol and Nym betray Falstaff to Page and Ford before they enter [*The Merry Wives*, II, i]), but occurs by the time of Cleustrata's entrance at the opening of III, ii. Her jealousy before this time, it should be noticed, has been based upon suspicion, rather than upon actual knowledge. It may be well to call attention here to the fact that Ford is much disturbed over Pistol's tidings as likewise is Cleustrata over those of Chalinus, which she has just heard when she comes in at the opening of III, ii.

The next evidence of indebtedness to *Casina* in *The Merry Wives* appears in II, i. The scene in both plays is in the street. Mrs. Page enters and reads Falstaff's letter to herself. While she is indignantly vowing revenge, Mrs. Ford comes in. The two compare the letters which they have received from Falstaff. They then resolve to trick him. In *Casina*, II, ii, Cleustrata and Myrrhina meet as each is going to the other's house, the former intending to confide her troubles to her friend. Parts of their dialogue are taken over literally by Shakespeare. This is shown below.

*Mrs. Ford:* Mistress Page! trust me, I was going to your house.

*Mrs. Page:* And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very ill [ll. 33 ff.].

Then Mrs. Page repeatedly asks the cause of her friend's trouble, until Mrs. Ford tells her of Falstaff's letter. Upon meeting Cleustrata, Myrrhina says (*Casina*, II, ii, 172 ff.),

Sed quid tu es tristis, amabo?

to which Cleustrata replies that her sadness is owing to her husband's follies and adds,

Nam ego ibam ad te.

Myrrhina responds,

Et pol ego isto ad te.

She continues,

Sed quid est quod tuo nunc animo aegrest?

Nam quod tibi est aegre, idem mist diuidiae.

It is only after some further persuasion, however, that she induces Cleustrata to share her troubles.

The comments of Mrs. Page (ll. 20-31) and of Mrs. Ford (ll. 64 ff., 101 ff.) upon their missives and their vows of revenge are founded upon Cleustrata's expression of her opinion of the character of her husband, Lysidamus, and her threats of starving and insulting him. In connection with this, it should be noted that Mrs. Ford suggests that the best way to punish Falstaff is "to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease." Thus, Mrs. Ford, like Cleustrata, seeks vengeance upon her tormentor.<sup>1</sup>

This dialogue of Cleustrata and Myrrhina breaks off at the approach of Lysidamus. Myrrhina leaves the stage while Cleustrata steps aside. Likewise, the merry wives are interrupted by the entrance of their husbands, who are accompanied by Pistol and Nym. Both women then retire to the rear of the stage. The passage in *The Merry Wives*, II, i, 106-12, runs thus:

*Mrs. Page:* Why, look where he comes [Ford]; and my good man too. He's as far from jealousy as I am from giving him cause; and that I hope is an unmeasurable distance.

*Mrs. Ford:* You are the happier woman.

*Mrs. Page:* Let's consult together against this greasy knight. Come hither.

In *Casina* (II, ii, 213-16) occurs this bit of dialogue:

*Cl.:* st! tace.

*My.:* quid est?

*Cl.:* em!

*My.:* quis est, quem vides?

*Cl.:* uir eccum it. intro abi, adpropera, age amabo.

*My.:* impetras, abeo.

<sup>1</sup> Here seems to be a borrowing from *Philenio*. The meeting of the three loves of Philenio and their exchanging confidences through which they learn of Philenio's addresses to each seems the source. For the three tricks upon Falstaff later on in *The Merry Wives* a hint, and little else, appears to have come from *Philenio*.

*Cl.*: mox magis quom otium et mihi et tibi erit, igitur tecum loquar, nunc vale.

*My.*: valeas.

Mrs. Page's "Look where he comes" is a nearly literal translation of Cleustrata's "uir eecum it."

*Casina*, II, iii, is a scene between Cleustrata and the newly arrived Lysidamus in which a quarrel arises, the beginning of which has been utilized by Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives*, II, i, 155 ff. After Pistol and his companion have left the stage, the two women advance to their husbands. Upon addressing Ford, Mrs. Ford is very sharply answered by him. As Cleustrata attempts to leave the stage, but is hindered by Lysidamus, so, reversing the action, Shakespeare has Ford bid his wife go home.

The quarrel between Caius and Evans which terminates in the abortive duel, I, iv; II, iii; III, i, has as one source the dispute of Olympio and Chalinus at the opening of *Casina* (I, i). The two slaves show first in this scene their rivalry for the hand of *Casina*. The other Plautine source for the duel is to be found in II, vi, 404 ff. Having arranged that the slaves shall draw lots for *Casina*, Lysidamus and Cleustrata (in much the same manner as the Host of the Garter brings about the farcical meeting of Caius and Evans) meddle with the hatred their servants have for each other and egg them on to exchanging blows.

The dialogues between Page and Caius, and Page and Fenton, III, ii, 61 ff., in which he tells them that he favors neither of them but Slender instead as a husband for his daughter Anne, are based upon *Casina*, II, iii, iv, v, vi. In these scenes Lysidamus and Cleustrata emphasize their support of the suits of Olympio and of Chalinus, respectively, for *Casina*. *The Merry Wives*, III, iv, 82 ff., shows Shakespeare's use of Cleustrata's part in the passages above cited. There, on being asked by Fenton for her good offices, Mrs. Page responds that she desires a better husband than Slender for Anne, but does not agree to aid Fenton. As Mrs. Quickly observes, Caius is the mother's choice.

*Casina*, III, v, which is one of the longest and most amusing scenes in the play, is the source of a number of passages in *The Merry Wives*. Pardalisca, Cleustrata's maid, enters in a pretended fright,



and after much persuasion on his part tells her master, Lysidamus, that Casina has become insane at the idea of marriage and, having got possession of two swords, has terrorized the occupants of the house. Lysidamus, however, is not to be diverted from his purpose, and he vows that insane or sane Casina shall be married as he has planned.

First, a hint for Falstaff's escape from the jealous Ford in the basket of soiled linen<sup>1</sup> (III, iii) occurs in *Casina*, III, v, 664. There Pardalisca tells how the household, to avoid the mad fury of Casina, hid under boxes and beds. The terror of Falstaff at Ford's approach in the scene above cited corresponds to that of Lysidamus in the Plautine play when Pardalisca tells him of Casina's threat against his life.<sup>2</sup>

Fenton's bribe to Mrs. Quickly to secure her in his interest (III, iv, 104) seems founded upon Lysidamus' presents to Pardalisca (ll. 708 ff.). Lysidamus' intention is by means of them to influence the maid so that she will entreat Cleustrata to prevail on Casina to lay aside the arms which Pardalisca reports she has taken up. Thus it will be safe for Lysidamus to enter the house.

Next, Mrs. Quickly's errand (IV, v) is based upon Pardalisca's acting as an emissary of Cleustrata in the same scene.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Quickly's aim, like that of Pardalisca, is to draw the prospective old dupe—Falstaff in *The Merry Wives*, Lysidamus in *Casina*—into the trap set by the wives. First, however, Pardalisca attempts, apparently by means of her story of Casina's frenzy, to dissuade Lysidamus from proceeding further in his intrigue, but she is unsuccessful in her endeavor. There is nothing to correspond in *The Merry Wives*. There Mrs. Quickly's sole object is so to manage that Falstaff shall agree to meet the two women in Windsor Forest, and it is only after some difficulty that she accomplishes it in V, i.

<sup>1</sup> This incident is almost certainly derived from *The Two Lovers*, yet the fact that a suggestion for it occurs in the Latin play should not be overlooked, since Plautus' incident may have aided in impressing Shakespeare with the comic possibilities of the trick.

<sup>2</sup> Here again the Latin play and the English novel both offer sources for incidents in *The Merry Wives*.

<sup>3</sup> Old women carry messages for the lovers in *Bucciolo*, in *Lucius and Camillus*, and in *Nerino*, but their part differs from Mrs. Quickly's and Pardalisca's. There is no such character in *The Two Lovers of Pisa*.

It is by no means improbable that Mrs. Quickly's story to Falstaff of the treatment accorded Mrs. Ford by her brutally jealous husband (IV, v, 112 ff.) is based upon Pardalisca's circumstantial story of Casina's insane fury.

Falstaff's misadventures in disguise as the witch of Brainford, as related by him to Mrs. Quickly (IV, v, 117 ff.), are based upon *Casina*, V, ii, iii, iv.<sup>1</sup> Here Olympio and Lysidamus respectively reveal how they have been pommeeled by the supposed Casina.<sup>2</sup>

Falstaff's persistence in his pursuit of the merry wives, as shown in V, i, seems suggested by the infatuation of Lysidamus for Casina, as displayed, for instance, in *Casina*, III, vi, in which the old satyr takes tamely insult after insult from Olympio. Lysidamus dares not offend the bailiff because of the important part which is played by him in the plot against Casina. Also, III, v, of Plautus' comedy should be compared. There, Pardalisca's sensational story of Casina's wild insanity has no effect upon Lysidamus' determination to carry out his plans.

Scenes ii and iii of the fifth act of *The Merry Wives*, in which Page and his wife are shown each endeavoring to outwit the other by arranging that Slender and Caius, respectively, shall steal away Anne from the coming masquerade, would appear founded upon *Casina*, II, v, vi. Here Lysidamus and Cleustrata encourage Olympio and Chalinus to persist in their rivalry for Casina and finally resort to the lots to determine which shall have her. In both plays we have the same determination on the part of husband and wife to carry through their plans to a successful conclusion. And in both the cherished schemes are later wrecked—Cleustrata in *Casina* contriving the failure of Lysidamus' project, whereas Mrs. Page, though she succeeds in circumventing her husband, is tricked as well as he.

The culmination of the tricks upon Falstaff (*The Merry Wives*, V, v) owes much more to *Casina* than to *The Two Lovers of Pisa*. Here in Shakespeare's comedy the amorous old gull is finally exposed to the ridicule of nearly all the characters of the

<sup>1</sup> Falstaff's confidences to "Master Brook" (III, v) are derived from the novel.

<sup>2</sup> The scene as presented by Shakespeare (IV, ii) should be compared. There is no disguise of the sort in *The Two Lovers* or in any of the other novels.

play, while Caius and Slender are tricked too. The fifth act of *Casina* deals with the working out of Cleustrata's plot against her husband and his accomplice, Olympio. In V, i, of *Casina* the women of the play wait outside the house of Alcesimus, into which the bridal party has gone, just as the characters of *The Merry Wives* lie in ambush in Windsor Forest for Falstaff. Olympio enters in great haste in V, ii. On being examined, he tells how his supposed wife has beaten him. Next, Lysidamus enters (V, iii). After he has soliloquized over his treatment by "Casina," Chalinus in his disguise confronts his master (V, iv). The old man endeavors to deny any attempt upon "Casina," but he is unable to convince Cleustrata of his truthfulness. At last he throws himself on her mercy, professing his repentance for his past ill conduct.

These four Plautine scenes are the predominant source for the exposure of Falstaff's foolish credulity. Only a very faint suggestion for them is to be found in the Italian or English novels. In both *Casina* and *The Merry Wives* the intention of the principal female characters is the same—to humiliate an old lecher. They lie in wait while the process is in progress. It is shown on the English stage, but related on the Latin. After attempting to carry away the situation the tricked character—Lysidamus in one play, Falstaff in the other—owns himself vanquished and asks for mercy. The latter speaks of "the guiltiness" of his mind (l. 129), while Lysidamus in good set terms asks his wife's forgiveness. In the meantime, in both plays the other characters mock their dupes. The pinching which Falstaff undergoes from the fairies is perhaps suggested by the beating which Chalinus as *Casina* administers to Lysidamus, an incident which had already served as a source for Falstaff's misfortunes as the witch of Brainford.

The conclusion of the subplot of Anne Page and her lovers is founded upon this last act of *Casina*. In *The Merry Wives*, Caius steals away a fairy in green from the masquerade, believing "her" to be Anne. Slender elopes with a fairy in white. Each is following the directions given him by Mrs. Page and Page, respectively. But, after Falstaff has been sufficiently humiliated, Slender enters in discomfiture and announces that he has run away with a boy. Caius comes in to report indignantly that he has wed a boy whom,

according to Mrs. Page's directions, he had stolen away as Anne. Then Fenton and Anne enter and beg the forgiveness of the Pages. They have eloped and have been married.

Here then occurs in both plays the marriage of a man to another male who is disguised as a woman with whom he is in love. In *Casina* only one such marriage occurs, whereas there are two in *The Merry Wives*, but, in the former, Lysidamus is as much deceived by the false Casina as is Olympio. There is no mistreatment in Shakespeare's play of the gulled suitors, as in *Casina*, but that has evidently been allotted to Falstaff, whose "villainy" is punished by the fairies with their pinchings. Only a trace remains in Slender's boast (ll. 195-97): "Had it not been i' the church, I would have swing'd him, or he should have swing'd me."

The entrance of Fenton and Anne as married is based upon the statement of the Plautine epilogue that, being found a free woman and the daughter of Alcesimus, Casina will be married to Euthynicus. We see, therefore, in both plays, that the true lovers in whose way parental disapproval has stood (and in Plautus an insurmountable social barrier) are at last united with the blessing of the same parents who had before opposed the match.

Thus we see that fourteen, if not fifteen, of the twenty-two scenes of *The Merry Wives* present in sometimes several places and ways more or less striking resemblances to sixteen of the twenty-three scenes of *Casina*. The Shakespearian scenes which appear based upon the Latin play are: I, i;<sup>1</sup> I, iii; I, iv; II, i; II, iii; III, i; III, ii; III, iii; III, iv; III, v; IV, v; V, i; V, ii; V, iii; V, v.

## VIII

Finally, perhaps should be considered briefly the question of Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin; for there is no evidence of an Elizabeth translation of *Casina*. However, this matter need not delay one long. Arguments pro and con have been made for over two centuries, yet no definite conclusion has been generally reached. To the writer it seems probable that Shakespeare read Latin with fair proficiency. This appears evident to him from the fact alone

<sup>1</sup> See p. 411, n. 2, above.

that the dramatist drew upon Plautus' *Menaechmi*, *Amphritruo*, *Mostellaria*, and *Miles Gloriosus*. Sir Sidney Lee in his *Life*<sup>1</sup> says: "Aubrey's report that 'he knew Latin pretty well' is incontestable. The original speech of Ovid and Seneca lay well within his grasp." Later Sir Sidney says of Shakespeare and Plautus:<sup>2</sup> "He had read the old dramatist at school." Evidence in support of Shakespeare's Latinity has also been given by Professor J. Churton Collins<sup>3</sup> and others.

But it should moreover be remembered that possibly Shakespeare had access to manuscript translations of Plautine plays (as some critics say that he utilized for the *Comedy of Errors* an unprinted form of W. W.'s English version of *Menaechmi*) or an obliging friend read certain of the comedies to him in English, or perhaps only outlined them to him. In truth, the important fact is that Shakespeare knew the plays of Plautus in some form or other. Whether this form was in the Latin or not is of secondary importance.<sup>4</sup>

## IX

From the foregoing discussion the writer feels justified in concluding that one of the sources of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is the *Casina* of Plautus. This conclusion he bases chiefly upon the resemblances of the two plays in plot and characters, although there are few places where verbal borrowing or translation seems discernible. It is true that there are many deviations from the story of *Casina*; the impartial and judicial reader must recognize, however, that those which are made from the plot of *The Two Lovers of Pisa* and from that of *Philenio* are as great. Furthermore, a comparison of any Shakespearian play with its source will reveal a similar alteration of the original. Here, too, in *The Merry Wives* is a situation which lent itself peculiarly to free adaptation: the problem of combining three different stories—one, that of a play, the two

<sup>1</sup> P. 22.

<sup>2</sup> P. 109.

<sup>3</sup> "Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar" in *Studies in Shakespeare*, pp. 1-95.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Irving Babbitt says in his *Literature and the American College*, p. 204, note: "The atmosphere in which Shakespeare wrote was so saturated with Greek and Latin influence as to make his direct acquaintance with the classics a secondary question."

others from novels—into a unified drama. With the same freedom displayed in his combination and adaptation of *The Taming of a Shrew* and *Supposes* as *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare altered the plots from *Tarleton's News*, from *The Palace of Pleasure*, and from Plautus, and wove them into a well-knit play—*The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

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NOTE.—Until the foregoing article was in type in April, 1920, the writer had not seen Miss Cornelia C. Coulter's paper, "The Plautine Tradition in Shakespeare," published in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, for January, 1920 (Vol. XIX, pp. 66-83). "A Plautine Source of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*" was completed and submitted to *Modern Philology* in August, 1919. The present writer's conclusions are, therefore, independent of those of Miss Coulter. They differ, too, considerably from hers, for he finds much more than a "faint" reminiscence of *Casina* in *The Merry Wives* ("The Plautine Tradition," p. 75), and he does not derive Falstaff from the Plautine *miles gloriosus* (pp. 80, 83). R. S. F.